Bird's-Eye View of the Peace Dove's Chances

Handicapping Our Presidents; American Poppycock; Russian Peace Pioneers; Britain, Not Grabbing, But Holding On

By A. R. PINCI

ON THE eve of a prolonged visit of mine in in Europe, during which I was to interview—and did interview privately—many European statesmen, when both the Italo-Turkish and the Balcanic wars had left a diplomatic bad taste in the international mouth, Woodrow Wilson, while sojourning in Bermuda after his election, advised me by letter as follows:

> You may be sure that I am in hearty sympathy with any policy that will further international peace. The details by which such policies are to be carried out require, of course, very grave consideration, but you need not doubt my inclination or sympathy.

This was, very likely, the first incontrovertible declaration made by Dr. Wilson with regard to his forthcoming international policies as President of the United States. Perhaps he knew of his predecessor's differences with the Senate about the arbitration treaties. The precedent that that conduct would establish against him in later days, naturally, he could not then suspect.

In August, 1912, or about four months before, I interviewed President Taft in the White House. It was campaign time, and the American people were not at all interested in foreign affairs that year. It was a tariff campaign; the adequate navy program had few friends. Yet the problem of adequate armament was uppermost in Mr. Taft's mind; especially so after the Senate had bled his arbitration treaties to death. Even as agreed to by Secretary Knox and the ambassadors of Great Britain (Mr. Bryce by the way) and France, they were quite weak documents, but their rejection implied a hostility that Europe, I found out later, was warranted in not understanding.

Can't Arrive at Happy Medium

Arbitration or no arbitration, President Taft knew that it was very difficult to define where good international intentions left off and where armament for security began. It was impossible to fix a happy medium; it is so today.

Said he to me:

> Our nation is growing fast—faster than many seem to realize—and the confines of the United States proper do not form the limit of our defensive needs.
>
> I have not abandoned hope for the two-battleship program. The Congress has authorized one ship, planning to make it the largest and most powerful dreadnought—larger than any built or planned by any other nation. It is not unlikely that the other battleship will be authorized at the next session, when the termination of political turmoil incidental to election year will pave the way for greater legislative deliberation.

A battleship even more powerful than that referred to by President Taft was completed and taken over by the United States the end of July, while the world was debating, as it still is, the General Disarmament Conference called by President Harding and to be held in Washington probably next November.

It would be trite indeed for me to quote President Harding's views as of the last year or so, and moreover, they might be, for obvious reasons, unconvincing to certain minds. So I will quote "Senator" Harding, at a time when nobody—except perhaps his constituents—cared about what he said. It was the first national interview he granted, and I reported it. Said he to me the end of May, 1916:

What Harding Thought Five Years Ago

> Our protective policy is certain to be the great issue of the coming campaign. There will be more spectacular issues, there will be the patriotic appeal for preparedness, with Republican committal to an adequate program for national defense. And it will be no new declaration for the Republican party. But the protective policy is inseparable from any preparedness discussion. Aside from the self-dependence in production, which is a nation's first reliance, it affords the means of providing an army and navy without the burden of direct and odious taxation. I like the thought of making our foreign competitor pay this cost of guarding us against his possible trespass of our national rights.

In a few words, therefore, will be found the condensed views of three American Presidents with regard to peace. Peace may or may not mean disarmament; but (though that is the point to be analyzed) it is worth remarking that each executive acknowledged, without so many words, some unseen power that rendered their personal peaceable opinions or policies ineffective.

Prior to the war, by a few years, the Hague and all it was supposed to represent in international law and comity was a dead letter. When I visited that city the famous Peace Palace donated by Andrew Carnegie was redolent of cobwebs—and the sophisticated visitor had no trouble in realizing that mental cobwebs likewise smothered the doctrine that stone by stone and nail by nail had supposedly blessed the erection of that magnificent building.

It struck me as odd, when my trip was concluded, and I examined my notes, that of all the miscellaneous conversations I had participated in, not one had excluded the overworked word War. It was evident that even in an imaginary state war was no mean topic.

If it were possible to make a collective—and timely—interview out of all those discussions, the easiest words would be:

"Peace? Of course *we* want peace! ..*Our* country has always wanted peace. It is the most peaceable nation in the world. It will work for peace always. But until other governments give us some concrete demonstration that—"

Everybody was willing to have peace, arbitration and disarmament, but no one had the intention of pioneering. It is to be doubted if governing men have changed their views since then, either in this country or elsewhere.

Russia was the first nation to start the ball rolling. Russia, supposedly the most militaristic and autocratic of any, suggested disarmament as a solution for the world's ills. Under date of August 12-24, 1898, Count Mouravieff, minister of foreign affairs, issued his circular note—destined to be the topic thereafter for undeserved satire—to the various governments proposing, in the name of the Czar Nicholas, the first peace conference. The preamble referred to the maintenance of general peace and the possible reduction of armaments. It is true that it was qualified by the word excessive, which made it certain that no two powers could ever agree to the exact proportions involved.

Russia, the First Peace Proposal

It would be futile to deny that the destiny that has overtaken the Russian Empire and its dynasty cannot have gained many European adherents to the disarmament proposals. Russia's lot either in the Japanese War or the later war was tragic indeed. The average statesman would say: "If Russia had adequately armed, the second debacle would not have occurred because the first one could not have happened." This view would be excused, if excuse were necessary, on the ground of patriotism, a word that seems to serve well especially those who most misuse it.

On the other hand, the situation is not hopeless. It is not sheer selfishness that actuated and may continue to actuate these men or their successors in office to treat this momentous problem so deprecatingly. There is no question but that it amounts to a sort of insincerity, which is another name for hypocrisy, yet the urge is easily determined. It is the primordial instinct of self-preservation, collectively defined.

This perhaps conceals the greatest difficulty of the problem. The worst statesman can rally the people through the magic term "self-preservation." As long as this is so it will remain very difficult for governments, which mean the individuals who happen to be governing, to yield in fact as readily as they will in word in the matter of international good will.

England remains, of course, at the head of the list. It is extremely doubtful that England will ever consent to any disarmament policy, no matter how limited, under existing circumstances, unless in the end she will still be supreme. In other words, any proposal that will change existing status quo will not receive British consent. Britain has no aggrandizement plans, as is well understood by those who have taken pains to keep up with the situation in England. Her problem is to keep from losing any part of the empire. To do so the home government has made certain concessions that would have been sheer heresy had they even been whispered during the late Victorian period. England, moreover, feels that Germany's present elimination from the category of great powers is a matter of a few years, and England has already found that Germany's crippled commercial power has painfully hurt British trade. On the other hand, regarded strictly politically, England feels no more secure from invasion now than she did eight years ago. It is merely the invading flag that has changed.

England Only Hopes to Hang on

British-French dissension has now become a fixed part of the daily news. The reason is easily found. The two governments are both forward-looking, but their horizons vary somewhat. England is beginning to examine the future of the industrial age through which the world is now passing, and much to her credit would like to predicate her policies on the basis that prosperity breeds prosperity. France, on the contrary, not at all versed in commercial matters, regards the world in the light of political power and ascendancy. But every student knows that France's limits were inalterably circumscribed centuries ago, and that the vicissitudes of intervening time have not availed that country to subvert destiny.

France Has Fixed Limits

"France as France can perform wonders," it was once explained, "but if she tries more disappointment will follow."

France, perhaps, seems to have realized the logic of this maxim, because France has no desire, and probably will never attempt, to become greater beyond the frontiers, but unfortunately French jingoists are trying to accelerate that internal greatness by the unnatural means of unnecessarily destroying her ancient enemy. The French jingoists would like to see a Germany that on the new map should not exceed in size an ink blot.

It is quite obvious that this attempt cannot succeed, especially in view of the fact that the United States, England and Russia (the new Russia) cannot adjust themselves to a well-balanced commercial relationship without the help of Germany. To this extent, therefore, French desires clash with the other powers' needs.

Italy, on her part, has lost an avowed enemy on the eastern frontier to find another on the western. The disarmament conference that will not recognize the meaning of this change, or will not acknowledge that it has been brought about, can never succeed. The Italians have become anti-French to a point that is all the more powerful because it is now inborn. Fortunately for Italy, there is no evidence that jingoists there are forcing a break with France, but the manifestation is following another course, the course of least resistance. In that balance of European power that can never be eliminated from continental affairs it will be found that in the future Italy will graciously yield in any program that will redound against the French. Italy's policy against France will be to ignore her entirely and lend her influence, instead, to other nations, against France if need be.

Russia will be Europe's future salvation. As the United States is abandoning the raw materials export commerce in favor of the more difficult one in finished products, England and Germany are both focusing their attention eastward. England needs Russia beyond common understanding; and yet England alone would be unable to exploit Russia without Germany. Right here there are possibilities that do not offer much to the disarmament proponents.

Russia Needed By All

As for Japan, not a little of the trouble between the empire and some of her occidental neighbors is due to unbridled talk. There is no question but that the Japanese have made much of their victory and feel their nationalism most keenly, while the Versailles Treaty confused things that should have been made explicit there and then. But is it necessary for governments, including this one, to be so long winded about the Japanese question? It was old 15 years ago. I have filled an acre of newspaper space in writing about it, ever since the end of the Russo-Japanese War. Japan has shown a disposition to dillydally about the subjects of the disarmament conference; it was not necessary to be so sensitive to Japanese *diplomacy* as this government has been.

Germany, on her part, has done much bluffing in the past and is doing a little of it even now. There is hardly a statesman in Washington who will not admit, privately, that German rancor toward some of her late enemies is about dissipated—that is to say, except the French. But even against French statesmanship they are not so bitter as the French would have the world believe. What is irritating the Germans is the fear that France may succeed in establishing an imperialism not unlike that of the Teutons a few years ago. The Germans feel the loss of their apparent prestige of yesteryear, and this is understandable, but since that has been destroyed they want no substitutes.

As for the United States, she is the one power that has no axes to grind. On the other hand it cannot be said that an ax or two are not being ground elsewhere. The United States has had a policy during the last quarter of a century of doing business by common understanding—by means of joint notes. That was, and is still considered bad form by that bureaucracy that would find itself without a job if a few stenographers could substitute a topheavy tinseled office.

American Poppycock

There is a tendency in the United States, and especially in certain sections of the press, to carry on a propaganda that would have it, in effect, that only the American people and their country are both desirous and mature enough to have international peace and collaterally disarmament. This is poppycock. The United States Senate has flatly rejected treaties of arbitration that had just enough mordacity to be worth the paper they were written upon; and by the time the extra reservations or amendments were added, there was not enough left to warrant the attention of a busy man.

Let me quote Chief Justice Taft on this point—a declaration he made a few years before one of the peace societies:

> With deference to those who oppose these (arbitration) treaties I must be allowed to say that the real reason for defeating them was an unwillingness to assent to the principle of arbitration without knowing something in advance of whether we were going to win or lose. That spirit is not one that will promote the cause of arbitration.

The former President was equally frank in saying that he did not feel warranted in going ahead with the changed treaties because he was anxious to make a substantial step forward in the premises. He was anxious to give to the world a model of a treaty that meant something in the matter of arbitration. A treaty gridironed with such "specific conditions as the Senate imposed, and emasculated by striking out its really binding feature, would not offer to the world such

(Concluded on page 15)